

traveling from as far away as Hawaii have distributed nearly 9 million pounds of food in disaster relief. The Houston Food Bank successfully provided relief to hurricane evacuees displaced from their homes, their belongings, and their livelihoods. Organizations like the Houston Food Bank have been a crucial aspect of ensuring that hurricane victims have felt welcome and well-treated in Houston.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Brian Greene, the President and CEO of the Houston Food Bank, together with the Board of Directors, the staff, the many dedicated volunteers, and all other supporters of the Houston Food Bank. These individuals are making a profound impact in their local community, and they are changing the worlds of thousands of hungry children. I thank you for your service to our community and your compassion to your fellow humans, and I wish you every success in future endeavors.

□ 2130

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DONNELLY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MACK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MACK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IMMIGRANT SOLDIERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, tonight I stand here today to honor the contribution of immigrants that have been made to our Nation, particularly defending our Nation in support of comprehensive immigration reform.

We need effective legislation that strikes the right balance between national security and reforming our current immigration system. This should include a path to permanency for millions of law abiding and tax paying immigrants who call the United States their home.

It's my hope that the Senate finalizes debating their immigration reform bill, and that our Chamber continues to work to adopt legislation that will truly reform the system and enhance our Nation's security.

Immigrant families are an important part of our social fabric and our economy. Undocumented workers, you may not know, contribute as much as \$7 billion a year in Social Security into our system and \$1.5 billion in Medicare every year, yet do not collect those benefits.

Immigrants, you may know, play an important role in defending our Nation. In all of our wars throughout our

history, immigrants have fought side by side and have given their lives to defending America's freedoms and ideals.

Twenty percent of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest honor that our Nation bestows on our war heroes, has been granted to sons and daughters of immigrants. Their bravery is proof that immigrants are as willing as any other Americans to defend our country's freedom, and their service is no less important and valuable because of their immigrant status.

For example, as of May 2006, 33,449 noncitizens served in our Armed Forces, and more than 26,000 servicemembers have become U.S. citizens since the Iraq war began, and 75 servicemembers received posthumous citizenship.

Immigrants make up 5 percent of all enlisted personnel on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, and immigrants continue to demonstrate that they are a part of this country through their service in the military.

Without the contribution of immigrants the military, as we know it today, could not meet its own recruiting goals. Without the assistance of immigrants, the military could not fill the need for foreign language translators, interpreters and cultural experts.

Immigrants provide unique incredibly valuable contributions to the military, and it's critical that we continue to recognize and appreciate their efforts and that of their families.

In the district I represent in California, we've unfortunately suffered several casualties, including that of immigrant servicemembers who gave their lives for our country. One is the fallen Marine Lance Corporal Francisco Martinez Flores who died while serving overseas in Iraq. At the age of 21, and only 2 weeks away from gaining U.S. citizenship, Francisco was killed in the line of duty. He was one of thousands of lawful permanent residents who have volunteered their service to protect the United States by joining the U.S. military.

On April 2003, Francisco was granted posthumous U.S. citizenship and Congress honored his memory by passing a bill that I authored to celebrate his life in the City of Duarte by naming a Post Office after him.

But in 2003, Sergeant Atanacio Haro-Marin, from the City of Baldwin Park, from my district from California also died in Iraq. He came under heavy enemy fire. This young man was born in Zacatecas, Mexico and moved to Los Angeles at 2 years of age. He'll be remembered as a proud and courageous soldier who was living out a long held dream of serving in the U.S. military and will be honored by having a Post Office named after him in the City of Baldwin Park.

The sacrifices that my constituents made inspired me to pursue legislation to help other legal permanent residents who risk their lives every day and die

protecting our country's liberties and values, achieve the dream of becoming a citizen.

And in 2003, I introduced the Naturalization and Family Protection for Military Members Act. The bill, which was included in the Department of Defense Authorization Conference Report, was signed into law, and recognizes the enormous contributions of immigrants in the military by providing them with easier access to naturalization and immediate family immigration protections for those killed in action.

It is a tribute to them and their families and all veterans for the enormous sacrifices they've made so we and others around the world can live in freedom.

I'm proud today to tell you that I support our military men and women, and especially those that continue to serve us that are legal permanent residents. We need to see an immigration reform program come forward that is comprehensive, and salute soldiers such as this who have given their ultimate sacrifice for our country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening, as I do most Tuesday evenings, on behalf of the 43-member strong, fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. Some people may say, what's the Blue Dog Coalition and what's it all about?

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're a group of fiscally conservative Democrats that are trying to restore fiscal discipline and common sense to our Nation's government. We're a group of conservative Democrats that were founded back in 1994 after the Republicans took control of the Congress. And at the time, it was a group that felt like they were being choked blue by the extremes of both parties. And today, we believe that we are in the middle, which is where we believe the majority of the people in America are.

We talk a lot about fiscal discipline. We talk a lot about accountability, because it is important, Mr. Speaker, that this Congress and this administration is responsible and accountable for how your tax money is being spent.

As you walk the halls of Congress, it is not difficult to know when you're walking by the office of a fellow Blue Dog Member, a fellow fiscally conservative, common-sense Democrat, because you will see this poster that says

the Blue Dog Coalition, and it reminds Members of Congress and the constituents, the citizens of America who walk the halls of Congress that today the U.S. national debt is \$8,831,299,779,793. Again, 8,831,299,779,793. That's a big number. But if you were to divide that by every man, woman and child living in America today, including those born today, every one of us, our share of the national debt is \$29,242. It's what those of us in the Blue Dog Coalition refer to as the debt tax, D-E-B-T tax. And that is one tax that cannot be cut and that cannot go away until we get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

So for the past 6 years we've seen record deficit after record deficit, which has resulted in this record debt. Now that the Democrats have a majority in this Congress, we, as members of the Blue Dog Coalition, are trying to put our Nation's fiscal house back in order. We are trying to restore fiscal sanity to our Nation's government. We are trying to restore common sense to our Nation's government.

As a small child growing up, I always heard it was the Democrats that spent the money, and it was the Republicans that balanced the budget. And after 6 years of the Republicans controlling the White House, House and Senate, what did they leave us? They left us the largest debt ever, ever in our Nation's history and they gave us record deficit after record deficit.

When I first came here in 2001, the first bill I filed as a Member of Congress was a bill to tell the politicians in Washington to keep their hands off the Social Security Trust Fund. Republican leadership refused to give me a hearing or a vote on that bill and now we know why, because they have continued to raid the Social Security Trust Fund to fund tax cuts for folks earning over \$400,000 a year, and they have continued to pass record deficit after record deficit and leaving our children and grandchildren with the bill.

The total national debt from 1789 to 2000 was \$5.67 trillion. But by 2010, the total national debt will have increased to \$10.88 trillion. Mr. Speaker, this is a doubling, a doubling of the 211-year debt in just 10 years. Interest payments on this debt are one of the fastest growing parts of the Federal budget, and the debt tax, D-E-B-T is one that cannot be repealed until we get our Nation's fiscal house in order and return to the days of a balanced budget.

At the Ross household in Prescott, Arkansas, my wife makes sure that we live within our budget. And I can assure you that most of the people in America live within their budget. Small businesses, big businesses, the majority of businesses in America live within their budget. Farm families live within their budget, and I don't believe it's asking too much to ask our Nation to do what 49 States are doing, and that's living within their means, requiring a balanced budget.

Why do deficits matter? Deficits reduce economic growth. They burden

our children and grandchildren with liabilities.

They increase our reliance on foreign lenders who now own 40 percent of our debt. Let me repeat that. They increase our reliance on foreign lenders who now own 40 percent of our debt. The U.S. is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign lenders. Foreign lenders currently hold a total of about \$2.199 trillion of our public debt. Compare this to only \$623.3 billion in foreign holdings in 1993.

Who are they? Our Nation continues to borrow money not only from the Social Security Trust Fund, but under the past 6 years of Republican rule, not only have they borrowed money from the Social Security Trust Fund, with absolutely no provision made on how it's going to be paid back or when it's going to be paid back, but they've also borrowed money from foreign central banks and foreign investors.

And much like David Letterman, we have a top 10 list. The top 10 current lenders, countries loaning money to the United States of America that, for the past 6 years, under these failed policies of the Republican leadership, have given tax cuts to people earning over \$400,000 a year leaving the rest of us to foot the bill.

□ 2145

So who are they? Rounding out the list, number one, Japan, our Nation has borrowed \$637.4 billion from Japan; China, \$346.5 billion; the United Kingdom, \$223.5 billion; OPEC, imagine that, \$97.1 billion; Korea, \$67.7 billion; Taiwan, \$63.2 billion; the Caribbean Banking Centers, \$63.6 billion; Hong Kong, \$51 billion; Germany, \$52.1 billion.

And rounding out the top 10 countries that lend money to the United States of America to help us pay off these massive debts: Mexico. That is right. The United States of America has borrowed \$38.2 billion from foreign central banks and foreign lenders in Mexico to fund tax cuts in this country for folks earning over \$400,000 a year.

Record deficit after record deficit equals what? The largest debt ever in our Nation's history: \$8,831,299,779,793. That is right. Today, the U.S. national debt, \$8,831,299,779,793 and some change, but we ran out of room on our poster.

Well, as I mentioned earlier, another reason deficits should matter is because interest payments on the debt are one of the fastest-growing parts of the Federal budget. In fact, our Nation is spending about a half billion dollars a day, that is with a "b." Our Nation is spending about a half billion dollars a day paying interest on the national debt. And that, Mr. Speaker, is before we borrow an additional billion dollars every day. And that is money that cannot go to education, to homeland security, to veterans' benefits, to build highways and roads, that can create jobs and economic opportunities, because it is going to pay interest on the national debt. It is going to pay inter-

est to Japan, China, United Kingdom, OPEC, Korea, Taiwan, Caribbean Banking Centers, Hong Kong, Germany, and Mexico.

In my district, I represent about half of Arkansas, 29 counties. About 13 of them are in the delta region, one of the poorest regions in our country. A lot of hope in that region that I-69 will some day bring jobs and economic opportunities. I-69 was announced 5 years before I was born in Indianapolis; and with the exception of 40 miles in Kentucky and the section they are now building from Memphis to the casinos, there has not been any of it completed in 50 years south of Indianapolis.

We need about \$1.6 billion to complete Interstate 69 across my district in Arkansas. That is a lot of money. At least for a country boy from Prescott, Arkansas, that is a lot of money. But, Mr. Speaker, we will spend more money paying interest on the national debt in the next 4 days than it would take to build I-69 across the delta region of my district, the delta region of this country, creating jobs and economic opportunities for generations to come. That is on the eastern side of my district bordering Mississippi.

On the western side of my district, bordering Texas and Louisiana to the south and also Oklahoma to the west, there is a lot of hope for the completion of Interstate 49. It will be the first north-south corridor through the middle of our country. We need about \$2 billion to complete Interstate 49. They have been talking about it since I was a small child. About \$2 billion is needed to complete Interstate 49. A lot of money. But, again, we will spend more money paying interest on the national debt in the next 4 days than it would take to complete I-49 across Arkansas.

There are a lot of people that would like to see U.S. Highway 82 four-laned across Arkansas from Texas to Mississippi. It is the only section of U.S. Highway 82 that is not four-laned. I don't know. It would take \$3 or \$4 million to do it. We will spend more money paying interest on the national debt today than it would take to four-lane U.S. Highway 82.

Interstate 530 is under construction in my district. We need \$300 million to complete it. It will connect I-30 and I-40 in Little Rock and Pine Bluff with someday I-69 between Monticello and Warren, Arkansas, and eventually, hopefully, find its way to connect with I-20 in Louisiana at Bastrop, Louisiana. We need, depending on what section of it you want to complete, between \$300 million and \$800 million to complete that highway. A lot of money. But, again, we will spend more money paying interest on the national debt in the next 2 days than it would take to complete this interstate, creating jobs and economic opportunities.

If you think back with me, the last two Presidents to make any significant

investment in our Nation's infrastructure was Roosevelt with the WPA program and Eisenhower with the interstate program. It is time that we invest in this Nation's infrastructure. We can create jobs and put people to work to build this Nation's infrastructure; and, once it is completed, it will create economic opportunities and jobs for many generations to come. But as long as we are spending half a billion dollars a day paying interest on the national debt and borrowing another billion dollars each day from places like Japan and China and Mexico, we will continue to neglect our Nation's infrastructure. And that is one reason why it is important that we get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

Let me tell you another reason that interest payments on our national debt do matter, and this chart makes it crystal clear. In the red, Mr. Speaker, you will see the amount of money that we spend each year paying interest on the national debt. That is the red bar. Contrast that to what we spend on education.

We say we love our children. We talk about how we want to ensure that they receive a world-class education. We talk about making college education more affordable for our young people. We talk about giving 3- and 4-year-olds a fighting chance, and we should.

We live among the freest of all people in the world. One of the few things in life we do not get to choose is who our parents are. Some children get really lucky; some don't. I did, and I can tell you that as an American citizen and as a Member of this House I believe that we have a duty and an obligation to be there for all of God's children. We can invest a little bit in them at an early age and have a good chance at turning a lot of children that have been neglected at home into productive, tax-paying adults. Or we can continue to neglect them and do what? Spend tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars warehousing them for a lifetime behind bars. I believe that we should commit ourselves to education.

But look at the light blue bar. Look at how much we are spending on our children's education compared to the red bar, how much we are spending simply paying interest on the national debt.

Homeland security, a lot of talk these days about homeland security. But look how much we are really putting into homeland security. Again, the red bar demonstrates the amount of money that we are spending of your tax money, Mr. Speaker, paying interest on the national debt. Contrast that to the light green bar, which demonstrates how much money we are spending protecting our homeland.

And, finally, and very sad, the dark blue bar, look at the amount of money we are spending on our veterans, on our veterans. And we all know that we have got a new generation of veterans coming home from places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Contrast the dark blue

box, the amount of money we are spending taking care of our veterans, keeping our promises to our veterans, ensuring that they receive health care, compare how much we are spending on our veterans to how much we spend paying interest on the national debt. And I believe that chart very clearly demonstrates why deficits matter, why debts matter, and why the 43 members of the fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition are committed to commonsense principles that will help get this Nation's fiscal house back in order.

One of the new Members of Congress and new member of the Blue Dog Coalition is my good friend from Indiana, Mr. JOE DONNELLY. At this time, I yield to him and thank him for joining me this evening.

Mr. DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. ROSS. It is a privilege.

And as you look at that chart and you see the indicator of how many of our veterans are waiting for service, waiting for care, when we are spending \$300 billion, Mr. ROSS, on interest payments and on the veterans approximately \$25 billion, I have the privilege of being on the Veterans Affairs Committee, and we have crying needs in almost every part of this country.

We were blessed in my home area just this past week. We were able to announce that there will be a new veterans' clinic opening in approximately 8 months in Elkhart County, Indiana. But, Mr. ROSS, we need so many more. There is a need in the southern part of my congressional district down around Cass County and Fulton County, but we have to plan so carefully because our financial needs require that we spend \$300 billion on paying down interest.

Mr. ROSS, I ask you to think of what we could do for veterans, opening new clinics and new hospitals, if just a small portion of those funds could be used instead of paying down a national debt that has exploded over the last years.

Mr. ROSS. The gentleman is correct. I mean, we talk a good game when it comes to our veterans, but then we saw the truth about what was really going on at Walter Reed. And tomorrow there will be a hearing with the Armed Services Committee that is a follow-up to a series that NBC News did about whether or not our men and women in uniform are really getting access to the very best body armor on the market today.

I don't care who makes it. I don't care where it comes from. I would prefer for it to come from America. I believe that is important. But if our Nation is going to continue to send \$12 million an hour, \$12 million an hour of your tax money to Iraq, I believe it is time to tell the Pentagon and this administration and the Iraqis that it is time for them to be accountable for how this money is being spent. And part of that is ensuring that our brave and dedicated men and women in uni-

form and, yes, my brother-in-law is in his 18th year in the Air Force, and I am very proud of him. My first cousin is in the Army and getting ready to go back to Iraq for a second time.

We all have been affected by this war. We all know someone who has been to Iraq. Unfortunately, too many of us know people who have been injured or have died; and I question this government on how many of those deaths and life-changing injuries could have been avoidable had we ensured that our men and women in uniform were properly equipped.

So this hearing tomorrow is going to be about body armor. And, again, I don't care who makes it. I don't care where it comes from. I want it to come from America. But just because our men and women were receiving the very best body armor when the war began in 2003 does not necessarily mean that in 2007 that that is still the very best body armor on the market.

And John Grant, I want to thank John Grant from Percy, Arkansas, in Garland County, the father of a soldier in the 39th Brigade of the Arkansas National Guard. His son has been to Iraq once. You know the deal with the Guard. You are supposed to go once every 5 years, but the President did that waiver thing, and now they are headed back again.

□ 2200

They haven't even been home 3 years. It is my understanding that by Christmas, or shortly thereafter, they will be back for a second tour of duty. These are not full-time military, these are members of the Arkansas National Guard, 39th. John Grant wants to ensure that his son and all soldiers, not just the 39th, but all soldiers in Iraq are receiving the very best body armor possible.

This hearing tomorrow before the Armed Services Committee tomorrow will be very important. I am committed, as are some 42 Members of Congress that signed a letter with me to the Pentagon, in ensuring that our brave men and women in uniform are provided the very best in equipment and the very best in body armor so that we can ensure their safe return.

I yield to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. We, in my hometown of South Bend, just this past weekend, last Saturday, sent off 175 young men and women who will be going over to serve in Iraq, and again, a number of them on their second tour of duty. The best, the bravest, the finest you could ever see. I want to make sure that they have the finest body armor that they could possibly have; the best vehicle protection that they could have; the best equipment; the best training. All of that costs funds. We want to make sure those funds are there, and we will.

But think, Mr. ROSS, of \$300 billion just to pay down a debt that never should have been run up in the first

place. Those Guardsmen, as they were leaving, I was telling them all good luck, Godspeed. And they said, sir, it's our privilege to serve this country. It is a right that we look at and cherish, and it is a great honor for us to have this opportunity. Well, our obligation is to make sure they have everything they need. As you said, there is a hearing tomorrow on body armor.

I have been fortunate enough over the last few months to have gone to Walter Reed Army Hospital on a number of occasions. I went through Building 18. I saw the holes in the ceiling; I saw the mold on the wall; I saw the wallpaper peeled off and hanging down. I saw plastic buckets along the floor because the roof was leaking in a United States medical facility, an outpatient housing center. And living in there were our brave Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who had been wounded and come back, and what they received when they came back was a room with a leaking roof, with mold. This facility is being closed in 2011, but part of the concern is do we have enough funds to cover everything? And here we are sending \$300 billion a year to the Chinese, to the Japanese, to the Mexicans because they are holding our paper.

Our obligation is to clean up this mess. That is what we are trying to do with PAYGO and similar systems that the Blue Dogs have sponsored and have brought to the floor of this House. So, I am proud to be an Indiana Blue Dog, along with my fellow Hoosier Blue Dog, BRAD ELLSWORTH of Evansville, BARON HILL of the Ninth District, along with my 40 other colleagues. And I know we are hoping next week to add approximately five more. We will continue to try to bring common-sense, moderate policies, not partisan fights, to this country so we can restore sanity back to the operations of this country again.

I yield to my good friend, Mr. ROSS.

Mr. ROSS. Well, I thank the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) for his insight and for his work on the Veterans Committee, among others. We appreciate what he's doing there to try to help our veterans and our men and women in uniform.

These are examples of why it is important that we get our Nation's fiscal house in order. As long as we've got record debt after record debt and record deficit after record deficit that the Republicans have given us, and we can't turn this thing around overnight, but we've got a budget that's going to put us back in balance by 2012, perhaps sooner. That is important if we are going to meet America's priorities, improving our infrastructure, improving and making health care more affordable and more accessible, funding education at the level it deserves to ensure our children receive a world-class education, keeping our homeland safe, making homeland security a lot more than just a buzz word. Let's put our money where our mouth is and ensure that every American citizen in this country is safe from terrorists. And of

course, making sure that our veterans have the health care and have the things they need and were promised for their service to our country.

A lot of talk about Iraq. If you ask a hundred different people what they think about this Iraq policy, you get about a hundred different answers. I can tell you one of the things that the Blue Dog Coalition is united on is demanding accountability for how your tax money, Mr. Speaker, is being spent in Iraq. Now, for the last 4 years, if you had questioned the funding in Iraq, the President would tell you you're unpatriotic. Well, members of the Blue Dog Coalition are now standing up and saying enough is enough, and we demand accountability for how your tax money, Mr. Speaker, is being spent in Iraq.

What are the Iraqis doing with your tax money, some \$12 million an hour? Is enough of it going to protect our men and women in uniform? Is enough of it going to provide them the most advanced body armor on the market today? Well, we all know that waste, fraud and abuse of taxpayer dollars has happened in the Iraq war. In fact, over the past several years, media and government reports have detailed examples of the abuse of taxpayer dollars in the government's funding of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As recently as April of this year, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, has released reports detailing examples of how long-standing problems with the management of government contracts, yes, government contracts, continue to provide opportunities for fraud, waste and abuse in the funding of the war in Iraq. Specifically, the GAO identifies the following major factors contributing to the mismanagement of contracts and ultimate waste of taxpayer dollars.

Number one, military commanders and senior officials at the Department of Defense do not have visibility over contractors, which prevents the Department of Defense from knowing the extent to which it is relying on contractors for support in Iraq. Also, the Department of Defense lacks clear guidance and leadership for managing and overseeing contractors. The Department of Defense personnel lack the most basic ability to make sure that government contractors even provide the services they are being paid to provide. The report finds that the Department of Defense's limited visibility has unnecessarily increased contracting costs to the Federal Government and introduced unnecessary risk.

For example, one Army official estimates that about \$43 million, \$43 million is lost each year on free meals provided to contractors' employees at deployed locations who also receive a per diem, food allowance. Additionally, the GAO found that the Department of Defense and its contractors all too often do not have a clear understanding of reconstruction objectives and how they translate into the terms and conditions

of a contract. As a result, at least \$1.8 billion of taxpayer money has been obligated on contracts without Department of Defense and the contractors reaching an agreement on the final scope and cost of the work.

The report gives one particularly shocking example of this, where the government allocated \$84 million for an oil mission and never agreed upon the final terms of the task order until more than a year after the contractor completed the work. The GAO estimates that the United States has obligated about \$14 billion to restore essential services such as oil, electricity and water, and more than \$15 billion to train, equip and sustain Iraqi Security Forces. However, the Iraqi government continues to be fraught with corruption, operating ineffectively and inadequately resourced accountability institutions.

U.S. officials estimate that a shocking 20 to 30 percent of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior personnel are "ghost employees," nonexistent staff paid salaries with your tax money, Mr. Speaker, that are collected by other corrupt officials in Iraq.

The GAO also highlights in its report the weaknesses in the \$15.4 billion program to support the development of Iraqi security forces. Consequently, poor security conditions have hindered the management of the more than \$29 billion that has been obligated for reconstruction and stabilization efforts since 2003. Additional government and media reports have exposed equally as outrageous examples of waste, fraud and abuse in the funding of the war in Iraq. Is this \$12 million an hour we are sending to the Iraqis being used to protect and equip our brave men and women in uniform?

One such report details an instance where U.S. administrators could not account for \$20.5 million in development funds for Iraq grants. Another government report exposed a situation where \$7.3 million was mismanaged, and \$1.3 million entirely wasted during construction of a police academy in Iraq. The Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction just recently released its quarterly report to Congress. As in previous reports, this most recent one again describes continued abuses in the government's funding of the war in Iraq. And we are going to go into more of this in just a little bit. We are going to provide specific examples of what was contained in that report.

But at this time I want to yield to my fellow Blue Dog, a new Member of Congress from Pennsylvania, a veteran of the Iraq war, a captain that served in Iraq, and that is the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY).

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Thank you, Congressman ROSS.

Last month, the Blue Dogs joined a wide bipartisan margin of our colleagues in passing the National Defense Authorization Act. This bill funds defense spending at a level 10 percent

higher than in 2007. It also calls for a much needed pay raise for our troops, and a benefit boost to spouses who had to face the worst news of all.

The other thing this bill does is it institutes some much needed accountability into the management of the war in Iraq. We owe special thanks to Chairman IKE SKELTON, and to our fellow Blue Dogs who worked so hard to introduce this long overdue accountability and fiscal discipline over Iraq war operations.

Mr. Speaker, report after report has shown that billions of dollars have vanished, and thousands upon thousands of weapons have gone missing. And until recently, there have been no tough questions and no accountability. With this bill, we said that it will no longer be acceptable for blatant mismanagement to take place when our soldiers' lives are on the line.

As a former soldier who fought in Iraq, it makes me very proud to be able to fight for accountability and oversight in Iraq and to demand answers here at home. It is astonishing to me that until now no one has tried to establish a clear sense of which American agency carries out contracts in Iraq. I assure you, to our troops in harm's way, missing money and missing weapons translate into increased danger. It is that simple. Having these rules and procedures in place will be very important to our troops.

This is a war that is perhaps different than any other; there is no front line. The enemy doesn't belong to a single country. They don't wear a uniform. And they are willing to sacrifice themselves and even their children to kill Americans.

Understanding the rules of engagement and knowing exactly who is on the ground and what they are allowed to do will be vitally important in keeping American service men and women safe.

The accountability provisions also establish a database so that everyone knows which American agency is servicing a contract. These provisions that all of us fought for and Chairman SKELTON thought were worth including in the defense bill will establish the necessary oversight and fiscal discipline we have needed for a long time in Iraq.

□ 2215

Clear rules and accountability are vital to winning the war on terror. It has been more than 4 years since we invaded Iraq and since President Bush declared "mission accomplished," and yet our troops are still refereeing a religious civil war, while too many Iraqis continue to sit on the sidelines.

While Iraq continues to smolder, Osama bin Laden, the murderer of more than 3,000 innocent Americans, is still at large. President Bush, when asked recently why bin Laden hadn't been brought to justice yet, said, "Why is he still at large? Because we haven't got him yet. That is why. And he is hiding, and we are looking, and we will

continue to look until we bring him to justice." That is unacceptable.

Meanwhile, the Taliban is resurgent in Afghanistan, and American commanders on the ground there are asking for more troops to fight terror, hunt down al Qaeda and kill Osama bin Laden.

We need to win the war on terror, and that means being successful in Afghanistan. Our troops over there are doing an amazing job and they deserve our continued support. It is getting harder for them, especially along the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan and some of the areas where we believe bin Laden is still at large.

Mr. Speaker, when I was elected, I said that we need to be tough and smart in fighting the war on terror, and I also promised to ask the tough questions of this administration. One question that needs to be asked is about Pakistan President Musharraf. Right now we can count President Musharraf as an ally, but is he doing all he can to hunt bin Laden? We need to jump-start this debate, because we cannot afford to let a mass murderer slip through our fingers again.

The U.S. has sent \$5.6 billion in military reimbursements to Pakistan for counterterrorism efforts. That is \$80 million per month. Just as we demanded accountability in Iraq, we have some benchmarks and goals for this funding as well.

In the early days in the war in Afghanistan, President Bush decided to outsource the hunt for bin Laden in Tora Bora, and he escaped. Now we need to examine are we relying too much on Pakistan and their accord with tribal warlords near the Afghan border for the same reason? Why is the United States continuing to make large payments, roughly \$1 billion per year, to Pakistan, even though Pakistan decided to slash patrols through the area where al Qaeda and the Taliban fighters are the most active?

Why, as Senator REID said, are we not paying for specific objectives, rather than reimbursing Pakistan for their efforts?

Is it true, as two American analysts and one American soldier reported, that Pakistani Security Forces fired in direct support of Taliban ground attacks on an Afghan army post?

Blue Dogs have a long tack record of asking the tough questions and demanding accountability. I hope over the coming weeks and months this Congress gets answers to these vital questions, so we can effectively prosecute the war on terror.

Blue Dog Democrats know how to win the war on terror, and part of that is by demanding results after more than 4 years in Iraq and nearly 6 years in Afghanistan. We cannot let Afghanistan become the forgotten war. We cannot stop asking the tough questions and demanding answers from this administration. Our troops are fighting bravely over there and they need all the help we can give them.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURPHY, an Iraq war veteran, for his insight and leadership within the Blue Dogs and within this Congress on restoring accountability, on how our tax money is being spent in Iraq, and ensuring that it is being spent to protect our men and women in uniform.

The gentleman raised an interesting point. We are in year five of this thing now, and a recent survey indicated that 71 percent of the Iraqi people don't want us there. In fact, 60 percent of them think it is okay to kill a U.S. soldier. You contrast that with Afghanistan, where 80 percent of them are glad we are there. The last time I checked, Osama bin Laden was spotted closer to Afghanistan than he was to Iraq.

So, while we continue, and I think this is just me personally, I think we have got to demand more from the Iraqi government to train Iraqis to be on the front lines, providing the police and military force for them in this civil war.

This line that it is better to fight the terrorists there than here, I don't buy that. If there are some 10 to 14 to 20 million illegal immigrants in this country, do you think we only allowed illegal immigrants into this country? Terrorists are already here in America, and that is why we need to do more to protect our homeland by properly funding the Department of Homeland Security. That is why we need to demand more of the Iraqis and to do more in Afghanistan, that is becoming more and more neglected every day.

I yield to the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. DONNELLY.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. Speaker, it was interesting over Memorial Day weekend, I was back home and went to a Memorial Day service in Rolling Prairie, Indiana, which is in LaPorte County, a beautiful county right next door to where I live, and some of the World War II veterans said to me, "You know, Joe, when we went to war, everyone sacrificed. We were all in this together."

Then I was fortunate enough a few days later to read a book called "The Price of Liberty" by Robert Hormats. This book explained a simple factor, that in this war we have been asked to go shopping, while the military sacrifices every day and their families sacrifice every day.

Mr. Speaker, what was pointed out in the book is that this is the first war in history where at a time we were going to war, we also decided to cut taxes and increase other spending, and this formula has resulted in explosive deficits.

My good friend from Arkansas, next to him is a poster detailing the cost of Operation Iraqi Freedom, close to \$400 million, heading to \$500 billion. When this was first discussed, the Office of Management and Budget some years ago said the top cost we would have was \$50 billion to \$60 billion. We were told, my dear friend from Arkansas,

that the oil revenues would cover all the costs.

Look where we are some years later. There has been an air of unreality from the start in facing up to the fact that, in the past, all Americans sacrificed together. And instead of sacrificing, we borrowed the money from the Chinese, we borrowed the money from the Mexican government, we borrowed the money from the Japanese government.

My good friends throughout my district, the veterans in Cass County and in Carroll County, would roll their eyes if they knew that we were funding our war by borrowing money from the Chinese. They would say, "Joe, how crazy is this? How does this make any sense at all?" And the answer is, it doesn't.

Instead of looking each other square in the eye and saying we have obligations, we have responsibilities, we have a sense of shared sacrifice, this administration has told us we can take a pass. Well, my good friend, we cannot take a pass, and the policy of cutting taxes and increasing spending on other government programs while funding this war continues on, the hole gets bigger, and the burden we are passing on to our children grows every day.

So I yield back to my good friend from Arkansas, with the hope that at some point we will understand that we are all in this together and that not all the burden should be placed on our military families.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Indiana, a fellow Blue Dog Member, Mr. DONNELLY, for his insight, and invite him to continue to stay with us for the remaining 15 minutes or so we have got here this Tuesday evening on the House floor to talk about accountability, on how your tax money, some \$12 million an hour of your tax money being spent to Iraq is being spent.

You can see the cost of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Starting in 2001–2002, \$2.5 billion; \$51 billion in 2003; \$77.3 billion in 2004; \$87.3 billion in 2005; \$100.4 billion in 2006; and \$60 billion in 2007. That was before the supplemental that we passed about a week ago which was about \$100 billion. So we are actually up to about \$160 billion for 2007, which brings this number not to nearly \$400 billion, but to now nearly \$500 billion, nearly half a trillion dollars.

Now, I promised to show a few of the examples of the waste, fraud and abuse of taxpayer dollars that was detailed in the report from Iraq.

Number one, of 150 primary healthcare centers that were originally planned to be built, only 15 have been completed. Of those 15, only eight are currently open to the public. In addition, eight primary healthcare centers have stopped work altogether.

Number two: The U.S. Agency for International Development Office of Transition Initiatives was supported by \$350 million to focus on democracy building, human rights, civic programs and investigations of crimes against humanity. However, USAID could not

determine whether the intended outputs of the 4,789 grants under this contract were even accomplished because of "insufficient documentation."

Number three: The report also found water damage in one healthcare facility that caused bathroom floor tiles to break and ceilings in lower floors to leak and collapse, increasing the health risk to patients.

Number four: A shortage of sinks and toilets combined with workmanship deficiencies, inferior materials and insufficient maintenance, caused significant deterioration to the barracks at one military base, a facility which cost our government \$119.5 million.

The report also details construction and equipment installation at the Iraq Civil Defense Headquarters that did not comply with the international standards required by the contract and task order. This particular project cost the Federal Government, our government, our tax money, Mr. Speaker, some \$3 million. We will come back to this in a little bit.

Number six: At the Baghdad International Airport, an enhancement project costing the Federal Government \$11.8 million required the installation of 17 new generator sets. However, when the airport was recently inspected, 10 of the 17 generator sets were not even operational.

And the list goes on and on. We will come back to it.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield back to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY).

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Arkansas, and point out when I was in an earlier deployment before Iraq, I was in Bosnia in 2002. Our soldiers on the ground there would often call the contractors Kellogg Brown & Root "Kellogg Brown & Loot," because of the looting, of what they were doing to their own country when it comes to our fiscal dollars. And I am not trying to be cute or funny. That is a sad commentary on what is really going on over there in these deployments.

Mr. Speaker, when I heard my colleague, Mr. DONNELLY, here from the great State of Indiana, and I know he went to the University of Notre Dame, I was with a colleague of mine on the phone yesterday. I was driving back from a memorial service for Private First Class Bobby Dembowski, who was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division who was killed recently in Iraq. He was from Bucks County, in my district.

When I was driving back from his memorial service yesterday with a heavy heart, I called my buddy, who is also a University of Notre Dame graduate, Captain Kobe Langley. I called Kobe, Mr. Speaker, and I said to him, "Kobe, I am coming back." He said, "How are you doing, Murph?" I said, "Kobe, not too good. I am coming back from another memorial service for one of our heroes that gave the ultimate sac-

rifice." He said, "Well, you got to keep fighting. You got to keep doing what you are doing."

□ 2230

He asked, What was the press conference you gave the other day?

I said I was standing up to this administration. I have the great honor of serving on the Armed Services Committee. I know my colleague and my fellow Blue Dog Representative DONNELLY serves on the Veterans Affairs Committee. We were both cosigners for House Resolution 162 because we want to hold this administration accountable when the Armed Services Committee says our troops deserve a 3.5 percent pay increase and there is already a wide gap between military pay and civilian pay.

The people who join the military are not trying to get rich. But if you are a private in Iraq, I don't think making \$18,000 a year is too much to ask for. We were trying to give those privates and everyone across the board a 3.5 percent pay increase to lessen that gap. President Bush in writing said a 3.5 percent pay increase for our troops is, I quote, "unnecessary." Unnecessary. A private first class making \$18,000 a year in Iraq is unnecessary. It is too much money to ask for.

So this House bill in which the Speaker pro tempore, Mr. ELLSWORTH, and Mr. DONNELLY cosponsored says a sense of the Congress is it should be a 3.5 percent pay increase. We support the troops and understand their sacrifice. We can find the money through PAYGO rules which the Blue Dogs believe in. As the gentleman from Arkansas says, \$9 trillion is what we owe in debt.

So my daughter Maggie, who is home with my beautiful wife, when my daughter was born in Lower Bucks Hospital 6 months ago, she was born \$29,000 in debt, a debt that we all owe combined, every man, woman and child, \$9 trillion.

Some folks, when I am meeting folks in my district, they would say, Patrick, we are at war. Of course, it is going to cost money. I tell them this Iraq war has cost \$450 billion, now up to maybe \$500 billion. We owe \$9 trillion to Communist China, to Mexico and to Japan. In March, 2007, the interest that we pay on that debt was \$21 billion.

Now I know those folks at home who believe in what the Blue Dog Democrats believe in, of fiscal responsibility, of accountability. They say to themselves, wow, Congressman MURPHY, \$21 billion just in interest.

When I tell them how I used to be an educator at West Point and how we need to be more and more competitive in a global economy, I show them the numbers, we only spent \$5 billion in education in March, 2007, yet \$21 billion on the interest rate and the debt that we owe that we continue to rack up and rack up.

Finally, the Blue Dogs are taking such an incredible leadership role, establishing a PAYGO system and doing

the things necessary to put our fiscal house back in order.

Mr. Speaker, I know you cannot speak, but I know you are a Blue Dog, and I am proud that you are up there; and, Mr. ROSS, I am proud you are one of our leaders of the Blue Dog Coalition. I am also proud of the freshmen Blue Dogs that I serve with, because we will demand answers and we will demand accountability of this administration and the next administration, hopefully a Democratic one, to make sure that we continue the progress that we are making in this 110th Congress.

Mr. ROSS. I thank Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania for joining us this evening and for helping write House Resolution 97, providing for Operation Iraqi Freedom Cost Accountability. We are not just talking about this. We are trying to do something about it.

In fact, some of these key provisions were included in the defense authorization bill, and we want to thank Chairman SKELTON and members of Armed Services for doing that.

It does four things. It calls for transparency on how Iraq war funds are spent. It calls for the creation of a Truman-like commission to investigate the awarding of contracts. It provides a need to fund the Iraq war through the normal appropriations process and not through the so-called emergency "let's hide the real cost of the war" supplementals. And, finally, it encourages the use of American resources to improve Iraqi assumption of internal policing operations. In other words, put Iraqis on the front line and get our soldiers off the front line and provide our soldiers to train their soldiers so they can fight their own civil war.

I yield to Mr. DONNELLY.

Mr. DONNELLY. I know we are starting to run short on time, so I just want to sum up what I have been thinking and saying here tonight with this: How far have we gone askew? How confused have we become with this administration when a 3.5 percent pay raise is unnecessary, but we lose \$12 billion in Iraq that there is no trace of, that was loaded onto skids into an airplane and can't even be found. But we can't give a 3.5 percent pay raise to the best, the bravest, the finest who have ever served this country.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. ROSS, that's part of the reason we need this Iraq War Accountability Act, just one of the many glaring things, but I leave that with the American people and let them know these Blue Dogs are on the hunt to get that fixed.

Mr. ROSS. I thank the gentleman from Indiana for his insight and the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his.

Mr. Speaker, if you have any comments, questions or concerns, you can e-mail us at BlueDog@mail.house.gov. That is BlueDog@mail.house.gov.

I am talking about House Resolution 97, providing for Operation Iraqi Freedom Cost Accountability. We are not just talking about a problem. We are trying to fix the problem. There are

only 43 of us in the Blue Dogs, a group of conservative Democrats, and yet we already have 63 cosponsors on this bill.

House Resolution 97 also calls for the Iraqi government and its people to progress towards full responsibility for internally policing their own country.

Recently, members of the Blue Dog Coalition worked together with House Armed Services Committee Chairman, IKE SKELTON, to include key provisions of House Resolution 97 in the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization bill. With the passage of this bill, we took the first step towards ensuring complete fiscal transparency in the funding of the war in Iraq.

The American people deserve to know that their tax dollars are being spent wisely and that our troops have the resources they need to succeed. The Blue Dogs are committed to passing legislation that accomplishes this goal.

Members of the Blue Dog Coalition also believe strongly that funding requests for the Iraq war should come through the normal appropriations process, as I mentioned earlier. Since 2003, the Republican-held Congress has been funding the war through emergency supplemental requests, two of them in 2003, another one in 2004 and 2005 and 2006 and 2007. It is time we stop hiding the cost of this war. We demand fiscal accountability in Iraq.

THE OFFICIAL TRUTH SQUAD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLSWORTH). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my leadership for the opportunity once again to come to the floor and to shed a little light. Tonight, we are going to shed a little truth on some of the messages that we have heard just now and maybe previously here in Washington.

This is another edition of The Official Truth Squad. The Official Truth Squad is a group of Republicans who desire to make certain that some sense of factual information is provided, Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the issues that are dealt with on the floor of this House.

We have a favorite, a number of favorite quotes. One of them is from Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Senator Moynihan said, everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts.

Mr. Speaker, it is curious to hear my friends on the other side of the aisle and their righteous indignation, the righteous indignation that they have about so many various things, particularly tonight when they talked about spending and funding the troops.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is curious because the bill that this House passed under the leadership on the other side, the majority party leadership, just 2 weeks ago, I know you will find this

amazing, but that is a bill that could have been passed the first or second week of January of this year to appropriately fund the troops who are standing in harm's way, who are defending our liberty and our freedom and attempting to carry out what they believe, we believe, to be a role that will result in a more safe and secure Middle East and a more safe and secure United States of America.

That bill was held up literally for 5 months because of political posturing and gamesmanship and all sorts of things that, frankly, Mr. Speaker, Americans are tired of. They are tired of it.

We all got back in Washington from a week at home. Most of us went home to our districts. It is good to go home and hear what people are really thinking. The folks in my district on the northern side of Atlanta, they are mad as can be about the partisan games that are played here in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I am here to bring a little truth and light and fact to many different areas. But I think it is important for everybody to appreciate, especially in this body, that the bill that was passed to appropriately fund the troops, 2 weeks ago we passed that bill, that is a bill that could have been passed by virtually every single positive vote in this House the first or second week of January had our good friends, the Blue Dogs and others, not participated in the kind of gamesmanship that the American people are, frankly, tired of.

I want to talk a little bit about the fiscal house being put back in order. Our good friends on the other side of the aisle talked about putting the, quote, "fiscal house back in order" which is why the Blue Dogs felt that they increased their numbers and assisted the election of the majority.

I think it is curious when they talk about putting the fiscal house of this Nation back in order. Because if you look at the truth, if you look at facts, if you listen to facts and not just opinion, Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate I know that what has happened over the first, a little over 5 months of this new Congress under new leadership is that we have seen an increased authorization for over \$50 billion in new spending. So are they putting the fiscal house back in order by decreasing spending? No. Over \$50 billion in new spending authorized by this new majority with the Blue Dogs supporting virtually every one of those bills.

So they must be then decreasing taxes, right, Mr. Speaker, in order to put the fiscal house back in order. Well, no, they are not doing that either. Because the budget that they adopted, this Democrat majority with I think the unanimous support of the Blue Dogs on the other side of the aisle, the budget that they adopted, over \$400 billion in new taxes for the American people. It is the largest tax increase in the history of the Nation. I guess that they would argue that is putting this fiscal house back in order.